(4) (p.27)

India and Western Religious Thought - Greece.

For the first time in the history of mankind, the consciousness of the unity of the world has dawned upon us. East and west have come together and can no more become separated. We cannot consider ourselves to be cultivated if we are nurtured exclusively on the past of Asia or of Europe. The thought and experience of one half of humanity cannot be neglected without peril. There is no power possessed by any race of men that is not possessed in some measure by all. The difference is one of degree. Religion has from the beginning been the bearer of human culture. Millions of minds, their thoughts and dreams, go to make a religion. A large part of the world received its religious education from India. In spite of continuous struggle with ~~civilization~~ superstition and theological baggage, India has held fast for centuries to the ideals of the spirit. Will Durant says, "It is true that even across the Himalayan barrier India has sent to us such questionable gifts as grammar and logic, philosophy and fables, hypnotism and chess, and above all our numerals and our decimal system. But these are not the essence of her spirit; they are trifles compared to what we may learn from her in the future. As invention, industry and trade bind the continents together, or as they fling us into conflict with Asia, we shall study its civilization more closely, and shall absorb, even in enmity, some

of its ways and thoughts. Perhaps, in returns for conquest, arrogance and spoliation, India will teach us the tolerance and gentleness of the mature mind, the quiet content of the unacquisitive soul, the calm of the understanding Spirit and a unifying, pacifying love for all living things." (The Story of Civilisation: Our Oriental Heritage. (1935). p. 633.)

Mystical aspiration is a genuine part of human nature and it assumes the same general forms wherever it is developed. The object of this essay is to indicate the affinity of type of the mystic tendencies of Eastern and Western thought, rather than their identity of origin.

Hindu civilization goes back to the period of the Indus valley, "the area of which must have been twice that of the old Kingdom of Egypt and probably four times that of Sumer and Akkad." (Childe - Light New Light on the Most Ancient East (1934). p. 206). Only two of the ruined cities have been explored so far, Mohenjodaro on the Indus, and Harappa on the Ravi. They are four hundred miles apart. The same forms of architecture and town-planning, of metal tools and weapons, are found in both. The members of the civilization which flourished in the 4th Millennium B.C., cultivated fields of grain, raised cattle, tamed the horse, harnessed the bullock to two wheeled carts, and taught the elephant to carry burdens. Tools of copper and bronze were in use

and craftsmen worked in silver and understood the art of glazing. A form of picture writing was in use: This civilisation resembled in essential features, those of Sumer, Egypt and Minos. "The Indus civilization represents a very perfect adjustment of human life to a specific environment that can only have resulted from years of patient effort." And it has endured; it is already specifically Indian and forms the basis of modern Indian culture." (Childe – "New Light on the most Ancient East" (1934) p 220) When we speak of the religions and social doctrines of the Indus people, we are in the region of conjecture. From the isolated sculptural works, we can infer the presence of the Śiva cult, Śakti worship and Yoga method. An apparent polytheism and a technique of psychological development found also among Hermetic groups in Egypt are indicated. From the skeletal remains and figurines of severally physically distinct types Primitive Australoid, Eurafrican, Alpine and Mongoloid, we may infer that the social order was not based on any racial or religious exclusiveness. It permitted the worship of one God, exalted Yogic perfection and tolerated different racial groups. Obviously its philosophy of life must have been profoundly social and profoundly religious.

The Second Stage of Indian Civilization, the period of the Rg Veda, takes us to the 2nd Millenium B.C. and we find close agreements between the language and mythology, religions traditions, and social institutions of Indians and Iranians on the one hand, and those of the Greeks, Romans, Celts, Germans and Slavs on the other. The gods of Father Heaven (dyauspitar, Jupiter), Mother Earth & the wide expanse of heaven, (Varuna), the Dawn (aurora, Uṣas), the Sun (Sūrya) are common to the Greeks and the Indians and they were conceived primarily as powers or causes working in Nature. The Olympian religion of the Greeks and Vedic beliefs, had a common background and there is also striking similarity between the social life described in Homeric poems and that of the Veda. Both are patriarchal and tribal. These agreements indicate that the two peoples must have been in close contact at some early period, but neither possessed any recollection of those times and they met as strangers within the Persian Empire. Thus in the Rg Veda, the European will find memorials of his own racial inheritance. "In so far as we are Aryan in Speech, that is, in thought, so far the Rg Veda is our own ~~oldest~~ oldest book". (Max Muller). For a considerable period after their separation from their western kinsmen, the Indians and

Iranians lived together. The most prominent among the deities of the Rg Veda is Varuna, wise and all-powerful, who rules heaven and earth and the underworld by his holy ordinance, rta, the right. He is the protector of the moral order. Nothing is hidden from his eye. He is holy and pure-minded. (pūtadakṣa).

"What is between heaven + earth, + what is above,
Everything Varuna, the King, sees clearly—.
The very blinking of men's eyes he numbers.
He who moves, he who stands, he who hides himself,
He who slips away, or secretly steals into hiding,
That which two, sitting together, secretly debate,
That is known by Varuna, the King, as third."

He has his kingdom, spiritual and truthful, "which he leads to victory against all opposition, an idea which receives emphasis in Zoroastrianism, in the struggle of Ormuz against Ahriman, in the contest of the divine light with demonic darkness. "Here first arises the important conception of a being who is by Nature opposed to God, not only in the sense of a demonic abomination generally, but in the sense of an adversary of the holy spirit of the deity with which he is in fundamental conflict. This idea did not arise upon the soil of Israel, but came down from Aryan times. (Rudolph Otto-

272) "The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man" E.T. (1938)

Varuna's kingdom is the anticipation of the Kingdom of God (brahmakaka) and of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Vedic hymns were however composed after the Separation of the Indians from the Iranians and at the time of their composition their place of abode was the territory of Sindhu (Indus). Max Muller gives 1500 - 1200 B.C. as the period of composition of the Vedic Hymns; Weber the 16th Century B.C. (History of Indian Literature;) Haug 2400 - 1400 (Introduction to Aitareya Brāhmana, 47 f.); Whitney, 2000 - 1400. B.C. (Oriental & Linguistic Studies, p. 21.); Kaegi, £2000 - 1500 B.C. The Rg Veda (1898) p. 11. He holds that the collection of the Vedic Hymns was closed about 1500. B.C. (p. 22.). The Vedic hymns and those of the Avesta celebrate the name of Mithra, a persian God which found ~~its~~ his way into the Roman world. For both religions, Mithra is a god of light, invoked together with Heaven, who is called Varuna in the Vedas, and Ahura in the Avesta. Mithra Varuna and the five other Ādityās such as the Mithra - Ahura and the Amshaspands are not to be found in the original Aryan pantheon. They seem to have grown up at a later stage when the Hindus and Persians were still together. In Zoroastrianism Mithra acquired greater importance. His fame extended to the borders of the Aegean Sea and his name was well known in Ancient Greece. Artaxerxes,

popularised his worship in his capitals at Babylon, Damascus, and Sardis, as well at Susa, Ecbatana, and Persepolis. After the break up of the Persian Empire, Mithraism received a definite form. Hellenic and Iranian beliefs came to be identified and Mithra was identified with Helios. The Mysteries of Mithra found their way into the Roman Empire and Nero wished to be initiated into the ceremonies. Later Roman Emperors followed suit, and Julian the Apostate was an ardent votary of Mithra. The worship of Mithra proved the most dangerous rival to the Christian Church before its alliance with Constantine. No wonder Renan observed, "If Christianity had been stopped in its growth by some deadly disease, the world would have been Mithraist." Then in the cathedrals the Bull would have supplanted the Cross.

We have evidence of sea-borne trade between the Phoenicians and western India as early as 975 B.C., when Hiram, King of Tyre, imported ivory, apes and peacocks for decorating the palaces and the temple of King Solomon. There was also commerce between the mouth of the Indus and the Persian Gulf, down to Buddhist times. Trade between the Indus Valley and the Euphrates seems to be very ancient for we find the names of the Vedic Gods, Indra, Mitra, Varuna, in the cuneiform

inscriptions of the Hittite Kings belonging to the 16th or 15th Century B.C.

In the older and or canonical Upanisads (900-600 B.C.) we get to the third stage of Indian civilization. The word "Upanisad" means etymologically Upa nearby, Ni, devotedly, Sad, Sitlings; and later came to signify secret (rahasya) instruction imparted at private meetings. They Set forth the fundamental concepts of Hindu thought, which still dominate the Indian mind. They hold that Self is the primal spirit, pure awareness, distinct from bodily states and Mental happenings, and the highest wisdom is to know the Self. The Self cannot be the body, because the body is subject to constant change, while the Self is assumed to be that which remains identical in the varied experiences of life. It cannot be identified with the dreaming self, which is also subject to changes, like pains and pleasures, suffering and joy. It cannot be confused with the State in dreamless sleep, for the self in such a condition seems to be Non-existent. The Chandogya Upanisad concludes by saying that the self which is the basis of the stream of changes, is the supreme light by

"mere is the reflection in our consciousness of that principle which is the foundation of our life, which by its continuous presence, sustains the broken parts of life and correlates them. This spiritual consciousness is according to the Upanisads, unseen (by sense organs), unrelated to the things of the world, incomprehensible (by the mind), devoid of marks (which can be the basis of inference) unthinkable, indescribable.

To know that the supreme spirit is not to be confused with any object that can be apprehended in this life is the most perfect knowledge of it. Even when we say that it remains unknown it is known by us. We affirm that it is unrelated to objects external as in waking experience, or internal as in dreams, and is a state which transcends all ordinary experience, though it is its basis. Reality is not an object of knowledge but is knowledge. For when knowledge is objectified, the known and the known are mutually alien. In such cases we cannot know an object but only know about it. In true knowledge of the real and not merely ideas about it. We should know the spirit and in the spirit (ātmānam ātmanā). And this is not possible if the spirit were an object. The moment we make it into an object, we distort its nature. Brahman is the impersonal Absolute to which no finite signs or symbols are applicable.

which we see and hear and meditate. The Māndūkya Upaniṣad confirms this account and distinguishes four states of Consciousness; ecstatic or transcendental Consciousness (turiya), dreamless sleep, (Suṣupti.) dream (svapna) and waking (jagrāt). In the waking state, the self is brought into relation with the physical environment by the functioning of the body, but the body is not the Self, for the sense of self persists even when one bodies are injured brains affected. In the state of dreams, the self is aware of other worlds than the physical. In dreamless sleep, the Self subsists, even though it is not aware of the physical world of waking experience or the Subtler world of dreams. The psychological ego which is a composite of ideas & imaginations, memories and affections, desires and habits, is not the Self, for we look upon our hopes and fears, our loves and disappointments objectively. The self is more than the ego, personality is truly a mask. The Self is a light which cannot be extinguished, whose attributes are truth & beauty, peace & wisdom, our true being which we do not perceive because of the ignorance which blinds us. We can, however, see it in the empty space of the heart (hṛdayākāśe), in the bare room of the inner man (antarbhūtasya khe). When the interior darkness is illuminated

It is beyond all the similitudes of our limited understanding. The Via negativa or the way of negation is prominent in the Upanisads. We can only say, "I am that I am". That in which one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, knows nothing else, is the infinite. On this Narada asks, "Where does the infinite exist? (Sa kasmin pratiṣṭhitah). He who raises such a query has not comprehended the nature of the infinite. So Sanat-kumāra says, "He exists in his majesty" (sve mahimni), and, afraid that his answer might suggest a distinction between the infinite and his Majesty, adds: "or rather he does not exist in his majesty" (yadi vā na mahimneti). The Upaniṣads require us to adopt an ~~attitude~~ attitude of utter silence in regard to the nature of absolute spirit. If, however, any description is permitted, it can be only in negative terms. This does not mean that the absolute is non-being, for the very fact that the self of man is able to know it indicates its kinship with the deepest in man. Brahman is Atman. That art thou. If a more detailed description is required, it is said to be pure being, awareness, and bliss (saccidānanda)

While insisting that the nature of the Supreme being cannot be adequately expressed in terms familiar to our finite minds, the Upanisads ascribe qualities such as oneness, wisdom, perfection, to the object of their worship. "He who is one, above all distinction of colour, who dispenses through his varied powers the hidden needs of men

of many colours, who knows all things from beginning to end, may he unite us with the sacred wisdom." This conception of the Real as the divine Self answers to the State of dreamless sleep. When Brahman becomes Isvara, the personal God, he is confronted by the principle of objectivity. The repose of Brahman is dissevered into the duality of subject and object. If our feeble minds are to form any conception of the inconceivable ~~by~~ beginning of things, we may think of the cosmos as arising from a self division of the Absolute. In the undivided Absolute, time is not, and there is no history. When the Absolute is ~~surrendered~~ sundered into the personal God & object, Creation dawns. The object which is ~~regard~~ regarded as the vast void, the framework of space-time, cannot be thought away. It is the unfathomable night, the Tamas which is mentioned in the Nasadiya Sukta of the Rg Veda. The Spirit of God floating on the waters rouses into activity the limitless possibilities of the Universe. At the Stage of duality the Supreme is conceived as a personal being whose knowledge & will are not dependent on ~~anything~~ being anything outside himself and who is in turn identical with the Absolute being itself. "He is the lord of all, the knower of all, the controller within, the source of all, that from which all things originate, & in which they finally disappear." (Mandukya Up: 1.6) He is the Logos, the knower of all things, ever present in

the hearts of all (Sarvasya hrdisamnivistam)
Yet the problem of evil is a real problem. The
Upanisads hold that the Absolute is not the
Creator of the world. The world is created
by God because nothing can become
Something, Something new that never
existed before, only through the dynamism
of being. From the womb of Nature (prakrti)
the Self (purusa) creates. Self is the father
who creates; Not-Self is the Mother who
generates. The two principles interact
and supplement one another. The free
human individual is both being & non-
being, and the progress of man consists in
the awakening of Spirit and the over-
coming of the abyss of non-being in his own
Nature. Creation of the world cannot be
deduced from the Absolute (Brahman);
but the world implies movement in God (Isvara)
and its relation to God is not accidental or
unnecessary. This view has led to the misconception
in Gnostics like Marcion who contend that
the evil world was created by an evil god
Demiurgos.

In the stage answering to the dream,
Is'vara, the personal God becomes
Hiranyagarbha, the world-soul, which is
said to be the first born son of God. We
thus have the Supreme Absolute, from which
both the personal God and the world-soul
arise to mediate between the Absolute and the
world. The Symbol Aum, including the
three sounds A U M, respresent the
supreme with its three gross, subtle,
and causal aspects. Even as the totality
of Man's experience includes the three
States of waking, dream, and dream
less sleep, the reality of Brahman

includes the gross, subtle and causal aspects of the Universe. The Upanisad says, "All that is past, present and future is verily Brm; that which is beyond these three modes of time is also Brm." Therefore there is no justification for confusing the Brahman of the Upanisads, with the Ens abstractissimum. The pure being of Brahman is not the last residue of analysis and abstraction, but the one Transcendent Fact in which all other facts are held. It is incomprehensible not because it is empty, but because it is full (pūrnam) The Supreme Reality is incomprehensible in the sense that it cannot be expressed in logical propositions, but it is increasingly apprehensible by the purified mind. The Conception of the ground of all existence in God, + of the kinship of the human Spirit to the divine, is the source of the urge in the heart, towards union with the beloved.

The world of multiplicity (nānātva) is declared to be less real than that of the Absolute. He who has attained an insight into reality will see that the world of multiplicity is the non-dual Brahman, pure and free and ever illumined. The view of the Upanisads does not destroy the sense of the reality & importance of the historical process.

The Upanisads protest against the exclusive sway of the dialectic spirit, against the rigid limitation of experience to the data of sense and reason. They believe in the possibility of a direct intercourse with the Central Reality, intercourse, not through any external media, such as historical revelations, oracles, answers to prayers, and the like,

but by a species of intuitive identification in which the individual becomes in very truth the partaker of the divine nature. Since that which is sought is one, he who would have the vision of it must get back to the principle of unity in himself. He must become one instead of being many. Life in the physical body is not our real self. Senses and intellect are only means for self is the witness of both. We must empty and exhaust ourselves if we would be filled. The Contemplative act is not a State of waking, dream or sleep, but is accomplished more in receiving than seeking. To Contemplate is to see and the manner of our seeing varies with the State of our souls. The soul is led to through a succession of States until in the depths of its own being it experiences the touch of divinity & feels the life of God. The Seer no longer distinguishes himself from that which is seen. He is one with the centre, which is the centre of all. It is the flight of the alone to the alone of Plotinus, the meeting of naked substances, the Sane & God of St. John of the Cross. "In order that God should bring the Soul to this union in his own way, the sole worthy action is that which unloads and empties the faculties, which makes them renounce their natural jurisdiction & operations in order that they may receive the infusion & the illumination, of the Supernatural." (Ascent of Mt. Carmel bk III, Chap. 2).

In the Taittiriya Upanisad it is argued that the human individual is the microcosm. The same structure is found on a large scale in the universe as a

a small scale in the individuals, who reproduce the whole in miniature, mirror every level and form of being from inanimate matter to God. All grades of being intersect in man. "All things are in all things, but in each according to its proper nature (Proclus - "Elements of Theology" prop. 103). Man is the highest of all created beings who can share consciously the creative freedom of Spirit. Matter (anna) life (prāna), Consciousness (manas) intelligence (vijñana) and bliss (ānanda) constitute a ladder of increasing reality which passes from the negative pole of pure non-entity to the positive pole of God's Absolute being. Man is essentially an intellectual being & can attain normality not merely by the development of his intellect with its productions of arts and crafts, but by the acceptance of the world of Spirit with its own utilitarian values. Man hungers and thirsts, not for bread alone, but for the bread of eternal life, for truth, beauty, goodness and holiness. To achieve harmony is the aim of his existence.

So long as the soul is held captive by the body, & the senses & is not their master, there is an internal struggle between good & evil, light & darkness. Evil is not a positive malignant thing, incapable of control & change. If good & evil are regarded as absolute, then their opposition & struggle will be without end and meaning. Avidyā which is more a functional disorder of the human mind than an organic defect of the universe, can be removed, and evil overcome. We must win a victory over our

Self before we can win it over the environ-
ment.

The Upaniṣad tells us to "Enjoy by Renunciation." The things of the world are there to be enjoyed by man, but in a spirit of detachment. What matters, is not the possession or non-possession of things but our attitude towards them. It is what a man is, not what he has, that matters. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad asks us to use the resources of the world for the unfolding of the Spirit. All things are dear, not for their own sake, but for the sake of the Spirit. To be detached is never to want anything for oneself, & from detachment comes wisdom, harmony, peace. The higher vision is possible only for those who have organized their natures. Jñāna or wisdom is a function of being. The path to it is as hard as the "sharp edge of a razor."

The individual is already in possession of the truth. The part of the teacher is that of the mid wife, to assist to bring the truth to clear consciousness. To become conscious of the world of Spirit is to be reborn.

Brahmacharya or initiation into Gāyatrī marks the Second birth. While the first birth into the physical environment involves division & separation, submission to necessity, the Second birth represents the victory over the constraint of necessity, & the attainment of union & liberty. It is life at a deeper level. The Jñāni or the man of insight is one with the universal self & has the utmost charity & love for all creation.

Things of the world do not tempt him for he is freed from the bondage of selfish desires & passions. He has emptied himself of all selfishness & does not look upon himself as his own. In a famous image, the Upanisads declare that released souls become one with Brahman even as the rivers losing their name and form become one with the ocean. The Taittiriya Upanisad makes out that the liberated Soul feels his oneness with God but is not absorbed in the Absolute. It is unity of Spirit but not of Substance. "Mine are the heavens, and mine the earth, mine are mankind & the just & the sinners: the angels are mine and the Mother of God, and all things are mine; and God Himself is mine and for me; for Christ is mine and all for me. Truly then what seekest thou for, my Soul, and what dost thou ask for? All that is thine and is all for thee." (Spiritual Maxims & Sentences — St. John of the Cross). It is the infinite love of God that is lived by the Soul. It is a unity of Spirit between the individual & God, so long as the cosmic process lasts. The free man is not bound by laws, for he has become more than the law, the law-maker, a King. (Svarāt).

"Whoever knows I am Brahman, becomes all this." This supreme aim of eternal life, the state of jīvanmukti is accessible here below, in this perishable and fleeting existence itself. The individual reflects from his personal centre the vitality, the fire, the light, the intelligence, the inexhaustible energy of the primordial Source.

the revolt against the Homeric religion.
In the sixth century B.C. India and the west were brought into closer political economic and cultural connexion. The outstanding event of the period was the fall of Babylon & the founding by Cyrus, of the Persian Empire. About 510 B.C. Darius conquered the Indus valley and added it to his Empire, which already included Greece. The first Greek book about India was perhaps written by Scylax, a Greek Sea captain, who had been commissioned by Darius to explore the course of the Indus (510 BC). The Iranians who ruled the empire from the Mediterranean to the Indus, were themselves kinsmen of the Vedic Aryans. The Indians knew of the Greek Ionians (Yāvanas) as early as the period when North West India was under Persian rule. The Greek script was spoken of in India as the "Yāvanāni lipi". The Prākrit equivalent of Yāvana viz Yona was used in the inscriptions of Asoka to describe the Hellenic princes of Egypt, Cyrene, Macedonia, Epirus and Syria. It was the Ionian Greeks of Asia Minor who first challenged the Homeric religion and sought for a more rational explanation of the meaning of life. There is great agreement between the teaching of the Upanisads on the nature of reality, and the Eleatic doctrine, between the Sāmkhya teaching and the views of Empedocles & Anaxagoras. Much has been made of these resemblances. Though it is quite

The Upanisads distinguish between parā vidyā, or higher wisdom, and aparā vidyā or lower knowledge. Only a few are capable of the effort required to attain enlightenment, while the large majority are incapable of such effort and for them the lower knowledge, with its belief in ritual & traditional ceremonial is intended. This is a useful aid for ordinary people.

For the first time in the history of thought, the Upanisads indicate a religious view which has for its central elements the supremacy of the Absolute Spirit; the reality of mystic consciousness; the distinction between intellect soberly contemplating the intelligible and intellect rapt into enthusiasm and borne above itself; higher and lower knowledge; the via negativa as the way of approach to the mystic consciousness; insistence on ascetic discipline; rebirth determined by the law of Karma, until the destiny of man is realised which is release or deliverance. This religious outlook seems to have affected the thought of the West from very early times. Sheffield in his "Mysticism & Catholicism" says "Especially does there seem to be a growing probability that, from the historical standpoint at any rate, India was the birth place of our fundamental imaginings, the cradle of contemplative religions & the nobler philosophy."

(1925) p. 31.

To this period belongs the rise of philosophical reflection in Greece and

possible that the Greeks and Indians reached similar conclusions independently.

The mystery cults and teaching of Pythagoras and Plato show a decisive break with the Greeks tradition of rationalism & humanism The Mystic tradition is definitely un-Greek in its character. In fact Nietzsche looks upon Plato's thoughts as "Anti Hellenic". A passing reference to the Orphic and Eleusinian mysteries and the doctrines of Pythagoras and Plato will help to elucidate the distinctive character of this tradition in Greek thought.

"Orphism was a reformation of the Dionysian religion." The great step that Orpheus took was that, while he kept the old Bacchic faith that man might become a god, he altered the conception of what a God was and he sought to obtain that godhead by wholly different means. The grace he sought was not physical intoxication but spiritual ecstasy; the means he adopted, not drunkenness, but abstinence and rites of purification." (J. E. Harrison, Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion (1903) p. 477.). Faith in the inherent immortality of the soul is a cardinal feature of the Orphic religion. In the phenomenon of ecstasy the soul "steps out of the body" and reveals its true nature. The release of the divine from the non-divine elements is the objective of the Orphic religion. The soul is not a feeble double of the individual as in Homer, but is a fallen god, which is restored to its

The Eleusinian Cult is akin to the Orphic and uses Orphic hymns. The root idea of Eleusis is more magical than ethical. It believes that the divine dwells in man. Initiation was considered to be of great importance. Through it we are twice born. Our first birth is physical; the second is unto what is real in us, to be changed in our nature. At the conclusion of the rites, the last words heard by the initiates were "Go in Peace". Compare "om Śantih, Śantih, Śantih, also "Peace I ~~give~~ leave with you, my peace I give unto you." These mystic Cults were well known to and favoured by the tragic poets, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. They exercised great influence until they were prescribed by the Christian Emperors. Julian the Apostate, was initiated at Athens into the mysteries of Eleusis. Sir W. M. Ramsay affirms that the Eleusinian Mysteries constituted "the one great attempt made by Hellenic genius to construct a religion that should keep pace with the growth of thought and civilization in Greece." (Encyclopaedia Britannica 9th ed. Vol. XVII p. 126).

J. Legge, "Forerunners & Rivals of Christianity." (1915) Vol. 1. p. 123)

There was a close analogy between these cults and the teaching of Pythagoras. He lived and taught in the second half of the 6th Century B.C. at Kroton. He looked upon Orpheus as the chief of his patrons. The great musician of legend impressed Pythagoras, who was led by his experiments in Music to the understanding of numerical ratios and hence to the foundation of Mathematical Science. Pythagoras enjoined an ascetic way of living & believed in rebirth & the purification of the Soul.

high ~~state~~ estate by a system of Sacraments and purifications. The orthodox Greeks considered this seeking to become like gods, the height of insolence, though it is the essence of the Orphic religion. We have the typical Greek reaction to the fine abandon of the Orphic, "God am I, Mortal no longer" in Pindar. "Seek not to become a god." "Seek not to become Zeus ---- Mortal things befit mortals best." "Mortal minds must seek what is fitting at the hands of the gods, recognizing what is at our feet, and to what lot we are born. Strive not my soul for immortal life, but do the thing which it is within thy power to do." The concern of the Orphic is not so much with the future of the soul as with the attainment of perfect purity - In the Orphic mysteries we find in addition to baptism, such rites as the Sacred Marriage, the Birth of the Holy Child, and these perhaps led ~~later~~ to later Christian Sacraments. "The early Christians owed some of their noblest impulses to Orphism. (J. E. Harrison, Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion (1903) p. 504; also 569.) The pictures of Orpheus in which wild and tame animals were represented as lying down in amity side by side because all alike, charmed by the notes of his lyre, illustrate the unity of all living creation. They may be the symbol of the Good Shepherd of the Christians, and remind us of Kṛṣṇa with the flute. Those who are familiar with the Vedic hymn of Creation, will note that the conceptions of night and chaos and the birth of love as well as that of the cosmic egg are accepted by the Orphics.

The earliest reference to Pythagoras is in a few verses quoted by Xenophanes —.

"Once he was passing by an ill used pup,
And pitied it and said, (or so they tell)
"Stop, do not thrash it; tis a dear friends soul;
I recognized it when I heard it yell."

(Oxford Book of Greek verse in Translation (1938) p. 226.). The Pythagorean order was a religious fraternity. Admission to the fraternity was gained by initiation, i.e. by purification followed by the revelation of truth. Purification consisted not only in the observance of rules of abstinence from certain kinds of food and dress, but also in the purification of the Soul by <u>theoria</u> or the contemplation of the divine reality. For Pythagoras pure contemplation is the end of man, the completion of human nature. Professor Burnet says — "If we can trust Heraklides, it was Pythagoras who first distinguished the "three lives", the Theoretic, the Practical, and the Apolaustic, which Aristotle made use of in the Ethics. The doctrine is to this effect. We are strangers in this world and the body is the tomb of the soul, and yet we must not seek to escape by self-murder; for we are the chattels of God who is our herdsman, and without his command we have no right to make our escape. In this life there are three kinds of men, just as there are three sorts of people who come to the Olympic games. The lowest class is made up of those who come to buy and sell and next above them are those who come to compete. Best of all, however, are those who come to look on. The greatest purification of all is science and it is the man who devotes himself to that, the true philosopher, who has most effectually released himself from

the "wheel of birth". (Early Greek Philosophy - 1930. P. 98). Pythagoras held, as the early Upanisad thinkers did, that all souls are similar in class and the apparent distinctions between human and other kinds of beings are not ultimate. Iamblichus informs us that Pythagoras held that the islands of the blest, were the Sun and moon. In the Upanisads the moon is mentioned as the dwelling place of Spirits. Iamblichus also tells us that Pythagoras travelled widely, studying the teachings of the Egyptians, Assyrians and Brahmins. Gomperz writes: "It is not too much to assume that the curious Greek, who was a contemporary of Buddha, and it may be of Zoroaster too, would have acquired a more or less exact knowledge of the East in that age of intellectual fermentation, through the medium of Persia. Professor H. G. Rawlinson writes: "It is more likely that Pythagoras was influenced by India than by Egypt. Almost all the theories, religions, philosophical and ~~mathematical~~ Mathematical taught by the Pythagoreans were known in India in the 6th Century, BC. & the Pythagoreans like the Jains & Buddhists refrained from the destruction of life, & eating meat & regarded certain vegetables such as beans as "tabao". (Legacy of India (1937) p. 5).

Socrates (470 - 399) was a great advocate of rational self discipline, but he was a deeply religious man. For him religion was quite different from the ritualistic religion of the Greeks. He was aware of the

Supernatural world and felt himself a member of the heavenly city.

The mystic tradition finds its full expression in Plato (427-347 B.C.). He held that the truth of things is always in our soul, which is immortal and has been many times reborn. It can recover the memory of what it has formerly known and in the Phaedo this fact of recollection is accepted as the proof for pre-existence. The soul not only has pre-existed but is indestructible. The dominating thought in Plato is that the ordinary man is not truly awake but is walking about like a somnambulist in pursuit of phantoms. So long as we are subject to passions, dreams are taken for reality. When the truth is realized, the shadows of the night pass away and in the dawn of another sun we see no longer in signs and symbols enigmatically, but face to face as the gods see and know. The simile of the cave reminds us of the Hindu doctrine of Maya or appearance. Plato compares the human race to men sitting in a cave, bound, with their backs to the light and facing that the shadows on the wall before them are not shadows but real objects. We live in the darkness of the cave and require to be led out of it into the sunlight.

We have in Plato, as in the Upanisads the highest God, the Idea of the Good in the "Republic," the Demiurgus and the Soul of the world in the "Timaeus."

The three qualities of Sattva, rajas & tamas have for their equivalent in Plato, Logistikon, Thumos and Epithumia. Epithumia, like tamas, represents blind desire with its character of ignorance. Thumos is, like rajas, the element of passion and power, standing midway between ignorance and knowledge. The Logistikon, or the rational element, answers to the Sattva quality, which harmonizes the soul and illumines it. The division of Souls into classes based on the preponderance of these psychical elements answers to the divisions of the Indian Caste System.

Sir Richard Livingstone writes that Plato is the most eminent representative of the heretics. Shuttfield in "Mysticism & Catholicism" says "The mind of Plato was heavily charged with Orphic mysticism mainly derived from Asiatic sources. India, always the home of mystical devotion, probably contributed the major share."

Empedocles believed that Asceticism was one of the most effective means of delivering the soul from the world of sense. "Whoever exerteth himself, with toil, him can we release! The soul at length returns to its divine status & the wise men who practise such holy living even finally become gods while yet on earth.

To the student of cultural development, it does not matter whether similarities are due to borrowing or are the result

of parallel intellectual evolution; the important thing is that the ideas are similar. They were firmly established in India before the 6th Century BC. & they arise in Greece after that period. History does not repeat itself except with variations. It is idle to look for exact parallels, but we can trace a resemblance between the two systems, the Indian and the Greek.

There are some who regard it as derogatory to the Greeks to send them to school to older countries cultures & assume them to have taken thence some of the sources of their knowledge & belief. But people of their acute intelligence, inquisitiveness, and flexible mind cannot help being influenced by foreigners with whom they come into frequent and intimate contact as soldiers and merchants as adventurers, Seamen, & warlike Settlers. To be a Greek is not to be impervious to every other form of thought.

The spirit of bigotry increased in the west only after Christianity became organized by the Catholic Church. The Hindus, on the other hand, have always been preoccupied not by religious questions & were, in their vigorous days, interested in the spread of their ideas. Up to a point, it is a sound principle not to admit that resemblances prove indebtedness, unless we can show the exact way in which inter communication between two cultures took place, but the possibility that all records of such

contacts may disappear cannot be ignored. Speaking of ascetic practices in the West, Professor Sir Flinders Petrie refers to the presence of a large body of Indian troops in the Persian army in Greece in 480 BC; also the discovery of modelled heads of Indians at Memphis of about the 5th Century shows that Indians were living there for trade. "Hence there is no difficulty in regarding India as the source of the entirely new ideal of asceticism in the West".

Dr Inge observes that the Platonic & mystical outlook on life for which religion is at once a philosophy & a discipline, "was first felt in Asia"; especially in the Upanisads & Buddhism.

Professor E.R. Dodds says that Greek culture arose against a background of Oriental culture.

The importance of Indian influence on Greek thought is not to be judged by the amount of information about it which has survived. Eusebius (A.D. 315) says that Indians actually visited Athens & conversed with Socrates. If Eusebius is to be trusted we have contemporary evidence of the presence of Indian thinkers in Athens as early as the 4th Century BC. At any rate while the popular religion of the Greeks is united to the Vedic belief, the mystic tradition of the Orphic and the Eleusinian cults, Pythagoras and Plato, which has had a great development in Greek & Christian thought, started with certain fundamental